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which marks it as a country situated in India. A clinching proof that Evilat was considered to be a country in India is found in the Hungarian Chronicles of the Middle Ages, written in Latin; they represent, on the ground of an ancient national tradition, the hero Nimrod, the type of the Scyths, to have emigrated to Evilat, where he founded a kingdom¹. But the existence of an Indo-Scythian kingdom is an historical fact that underlies no doubt, for coins of that kingdom are still extant; and, besides, in the above-quoted record of Cosmas, Hunnia (*Oúvvia*) is mentioned together with Evilat. Considering all this, the identity of חִילָה, respectively Evilat, with India appears to be a fact with which history will have to reckon, and I shall be glad if I have, by this article, directed the attention of historians to this point.

SAMUEL KRAUSS.

A HEBREW MS. ILLUSTRATED BY GIOTTO.

LOT 26 of the late Earl of Ashburnham's "Appendix" MSS., which was sold at Sotheby's for Mr. Yates Thompson on May 1, 1899, is catalogued as follows:—

"*La Guida dello Popolo de Israele, in Hebrew, XIV Century*; vellum, 12mo, $4\frac{1}{2} \times 3$ inches, ff. 150.

In the original binding of oak and ebony, inlaid with mother-of-pearl. On each cover is a shield of ivory, the one with the arms and initials of Galeotto Malatesta engraved upon it, the other with the arms of Cardinal Gozio Battaglia.

A note in the autograph of the cardinal states that this book was written at his desire by a learned Jew, by name Aramban; and that the miniatures (of which there are twenty-seven, besides ornamental borders), were painted by Giotto, or, in the Venetian dialect, Ziotto da Fiorenza and his most distinguished pupil, whose name is not given. Both the painter and the scribe were at Avignon in attendance upon Pope Benedict XII about the time when this book was presented by the Cardinal to Galeotto Malatesta, to be placed in his library at Rimini. After the above note is a licence to read and keep this book, granted by Benedict XII, dated Avenione, anno iiij (1338).

An account of the Pope's residence in Avignon, and some notice of the Cardinal, will be found in "S. Baluzii Vitae Paparum Avenionensium."

¹ I discussed this at length in the Hungarian magazine, *Ethnographia*, IX (1898).

The writer of this Note was an unsuccessful candidate for the possession of this desirable little volume. To his great chagrin, he was outbid by a collector of Italian miniatures, said to be the Duc de Rivoli of Paris, and too wealthy to be a Hebraist.

It would be wonderful indeed if the book were really what it pretends to be—written by Nachmanides, and illustrated by the greatest of the early Florentine painters. Giotto was born in 1266, and therefore a contemporary, though not a collaborateur of Nachmanides, who died a few years later, but hardly after 1275. The fact, if fact it be—would settle once and for all two moot points in the history of art. The one is as to whether Cimabue's great pupil ever condescended to illustrate books, an allegation which has been strenuously denied and as strenuously affirmed. The other is of more specifically Jewish interest. Did Christian artists illuminate Jewish books? Kaufmann in his masterly excursus on the illuminations of Hebrew MSS. in the "Hagadah von Sarajevo" comes to the conclusion that they did not. Steinschneider thinks they did.

But there are difficulties which to some authorities have made it almost impossible to believe this story of the book. Internal evidence, and that of great connoisseurs, is against dating its pictures earlier than the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century. They are Florentine, but not in the style of Giotto. Then again, the long note at the end of the MS. (or rather the beginning if we are to begin counting from the left) occupies several vellum pages, and apparently these pages are contemporary with the others written in Hebrew. The handwriting is bold and legible, but hardly that of the cardinal, for it is taken by Mr. Quaritch and others to be of the fifteenth century. Yates Thompson, the princely collector, who bought the whole of the Ashburnham "Appendix" *en bloc*, and therewith acquired our little puzzle, submitted it to diverse learned pundits at Cambridge and elsewhere for examination. They must have pronounced against it and discouraged its owner, who, wishing to weed out from his collection anything not above suspicion, sent it to the hammer with some other Ashburnham treasures not choice enough for his taste. Before seeing the book, I was inclined to think that a solution of the mystery lay in the possibility that "Aramban" did not mean הרמב"ן, the Ramban, but another scribe of the same initials, e.g. Moses Ben Nathan of Narbonne, who wrote Bodleian MS. 316 in 1323, or less likely Moses Ben Nisim (Qamhi) who wrote Bodleian MS. 2087 at Rome in 1413. If the latter, one would have to assume that the Pope was not the twelfth but the thirteenth Benedict. He reigned at Avignon from 1394 to 1424, and his fourth year would be 1398—a date which would satisfy the experts, but involve the

creation in Florence of another Giotto or Ziotto, of whom, or of whose disciples, nobody has ever heard, and in Avignon of another Cardinal Battaglia who served another Benedict.

On the Saturday before the sale I was enabled to examine the booklet at Sotheby's, but unfortunately it was Saturday and I could take no notes, and I am therefore writing from recollection only and "errors excepted." After spending some time over the book and handling it with infinite pleasure and reverence, I have come to the conclusion that it is all that it professes to be, but *not* all that the cataloguer claims for it. The Hebrew has no title, but consists of a compilation of various occasional prayers for all the events of life—Birth, Milah, Betrothal, Marriage, Travel, Burial, and so on. Of these one certainly, and I think, two, the Traveller's Prayer "סגולה לדרך" and a "ברכי נפשי" are in the heading ascribed to the רמב"ן. Nachmanides is known to have composed such prayers. A list of them is furnished by Steinschneider in the Bodleian Catalogue (p. 1963, No. 60). The pictures are somewhat rubbed but still give us life-like representations of the scenes they are meant to represent. They are characteristically Jewish. In one a Bride and Bridegroom have a single "Tallith" over their heads in place of our Bridal Canopy, in another there is pictured a striking group of unconventional mourners (only men) round an open grave. Obviously the painters of the innumerable Italian "Circumcisions," and "Sposalia," and "Entombments," went to the Jews for their models. I venture to suggest that there is nothing forged in the MS. The binding enshrines a real medallion with the real arms of a real Cardinal Battaglia. The description is in his Eminence's own handwriting. The seal is the true seal stamped by a Secretary of Pope Benedict XII. As for the evidence of experts, that is proverbially untrustworthy. Modern events have made one specially prejudiced against the expert who pretends to discredit and disparage. It is commonplace to assume that things are not what they seem. The Jewish principle is quite opposed to such a point of view. Everybody is משיח לפי תומו, and to be assumed to be telling the truth till he is proved a liar.

The Cataloguer has simply misunderstood what the worthy cardinal meant to convey to his good friend Malatesta of Rimini, whose taste has shown him to be a very different sort of person from the Malabesta or חיה רעה of the English Jews of his time. Battaglia says that this "guide of the people of Israel" (מורה בני ישראל) perhaps with a reminiscence of Maimonides) was written, i.e. composed by the learned Ramban, and written for him by another learned Israelite, whose name he does not record. And he had it illustrated by Giotto and Giotto's best pupil. There is nothing inherently improbable

about this, and the admission of the pupil's hand is really, on the good old Jewish principle of *מנו*, an argument for the cardinal's veracity. Moreover, we may throw a sop to the expert, and plead that the pupil is later than the master, and therefore inclined to the end rather than the beginning of his century.

Anyhow, the picture the book gives us of the cordial relations between Jew and Christian in mediaeval Italy is quite as fine as anything painted in it by even Giotto the master. The cardinal ordering a Jew's prayerbook to be illuminated for a bookworm by the finest artist of the day. The Pope signing and sealing permission for that same bookworm to read the book and treasure it. The Jewish vagrant scribe discoursing to these great dignitaries of the Church on the glorious learning of his Rabbi. Are we quite as broad-minded nowadays? How many Jewish millionaires are there who would pay as much for a Barmitzvah present to his own son and heir or make so edifying a choice? How many Jewish bidders were there for this very little book?

E. N. ADLER.

LAY POEMS OF BAGDAD.

(AN UNKNOWN HEBREW DIVAN OF ALCHARISI'S TIME.)

DURING a visit to Aleppo in the fall of last year, I felt the keenest disappointment at the poor results achieved after a systematic search for literary treasure in what—from a distance—seemed so rich a quarry. I delved and groped in the recesses of the huge Genizah of the oldest and one of the largest Synagogues now existing, but though the dust was more acrid, and the work far dirtier than that of Fostat, the matrix was modern, and the dirt not pay dirt. I left the ancient city discouraged and disgusted, but just as I reached the gate a poor man hurried up with a bundle of pages which he offered me. I did not want to take it, but by way of polite negative, offered him half a mejidieh. "It is yours," he cried, and passed me the bundle, which I accepted without enthusiasm, though with a sort of idea that it might serve as "Reise Literatur." When, however, I came to examine it, I found that it was veritable treasure-trove—better than anything I had consciously acquired. It turned out to be the Divan, or rather a very large fragment of the Divan, composed by an Eastern poet, probably of Bagdad, who was on terms of intimacy with the son of Maimonides, and most of the other Hebrew worthies of his time. Its style is not unlike that of the Tahkemoni, and of the same date. The volume contains 281 poems